

SG 3554

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property

Historic Name: River Oaks Courts
Other name/site number: Stokes Motor Courts, Stokes Tourist Courts, Stokes Tourist Camp
Name of related multiple property listing: NA

2. Location

Street & number: 14349 TX-16 (Robertson Creek Road)
City or town: Medina State: Texas County: Bandera
Not for publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this
(nomination request for determination of eligibility) meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property (meets does not meet) the National Register criteria.

I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following levels of significance:
 national statewide local

Applicable National Register Criteria: A B C D

Mark Wolfe State Historic Preservation Officer
Signature of certifying official / Title Date 12/7/18
Texas Historical Commission
State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.
Signature of commenting or other official Date
State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:
 entered in the National Register
 determined eligible for the National Register
 determined not eligible for the National Register.
 removed from the National Register
 other, explain: _____

[Signature] Signature of the Keeper Date of Action 1/29/2019

River Oaks Courts, Medina, Bandera County, Texas

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Private
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - Federal

Category of Property

<input type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
13	0	buildings
0	0	sites
2	0	structures
1	0	objects
16	0	total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: NA

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions: DOMESTIC/hotel

Current Functions: VACANT

7. Description

Architectural Classification: Late 19th and Early 20th Century American Movements: Rustic

Principal Exterior Materials: STONE/Limestone, WOOD

Narrative Description (see continuation sheets 7-7 through 7-14)

River Oaks Courts, Medina, Bandera County, Texas

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	A	Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
	B	Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	C	Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
	D	Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations: NA

Areas of Significance: Commerce, Architecture

Period of Significance: 1930-1969

Significant Dates: 1935, 1945

Significant Person (only if criterion b is marked): NA

Cultural Affiliation (only if criterion d is marked): NA

Architect/Builder: LeSturgeon Masonry (builder)

Narrative Statement of Significance (see continuation sheets 8-15 through 8-23)

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography (see continuation sheet 9-24 through 9-25)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested. (*Part 1 approved 5-24-2018*)
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office (*Texas Historical Commission, Austin*)
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository:

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): NA

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: 11.086 acres

Coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: NA

1. Latitude: 29.802607° N Longitude: -99.253968° W
2. Latitude: 29.801426° N Longitude: -99.253220° W
3. Latitude: 29.800634° N Longitude: -99.256767° W
4. Latitude: 29.802224° N Longitude: -99.256254° W

Verbal Boundary Description: ABST 91 A CURVIER SVY 73 TR 9 11.086 ACRES

Boundary Justification: The verbal boundary description encompasses the entire legal parcel the historic district occupies.

11. Form Prepared By

Name/title: Hannah Curry-Shearouse and Victoria Myers, Historic Preservation Specialists, with assistance from THC Staff

Organization: SWCA Environmental Consultants

Street & number: 10245 W. Little York, Suite 600

City or Town: Houston State: TX Zip Code: 77040

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Date: March 1, 2018

Additional Documentation

Maps (see continuation sheet MAP-26 through Map-27)

Additional items (see continuation sheets FIGURE-28 through FIGURE-37)

Photographs (see continuation sheet PHOTO-38 through PHOTO-48)

River Oaks Courts, Medina, Bandera County, Texas

Photograph Log

River Oaks Courts
Medina, Bandera County, Texas
Photographer: SWCA Environmental Consultants
Date Photographed: August 2017

Photograph Number 0001

Description of Photograph(s): Residence/Office Building south façade and east elevation, camera facing northwest.

Photograph Number 0002

Description of Photograph(s): Cabin #1 east façade and north elevation, camera facing southwest.

Photograph Number 0003

Description of Photograph(s): Cabin #2 east façade, camera facing west.

Photograph Number 0004

Description of Photograph(s): Cabin #3 east façade, camera facing west.

Photograph Number 0005

Description of Photograph(s): Cabins #4 and #5 east façades with arched carports, camera facing west.

Photograph Number 0006

Description of Photograph(s): Cabin #6, south elevation and east façade, camera facing northwest.

Photograph Number 0007

Description of Photograph(s): Cabin #7 east elevation and north façade, camera facing southwest.

Photograph Number 0008

Description of Photograph(s): Cabin #8 west façade, camera facing east.

Photograph Number 0009

Description of Photograph(s): Cabin #9 west façade, camera facing east.

Photograph Number 0010

Description of Photograph(s): Cabin #10 west façade, camera facing east.

Photograph Number 0011

Description of Photograph(s): 1945 Fourplex with units #11-14 east façade, camera facing west.

Photograph Number 0012

Description of Photograph(s): River Oaks Courts roadside sign (c. 1945), camera facing south.

Photograph Number 0013

Description of Photograph(s): Garage east and north elevations, camera facing southwest.

Photograph Number 0014

Description of Photograph(s): Utility shed west elevation, camera facing east.

Photograph Number 0015

Description of Photograph(s): Artesian well, camera facing east.

Photograph Number 0016

Description of Photograph(s): Stone pillars, camera facing south.

Photograph Number 0017

Description of Photograph(s): River Oaks Courts, camera facing southwest from across TX-16.

Photograph Number 0018

Description of Photograph(s): River Oaks Courts, camera facing north from the center of the site.

Photograph Number 0019

Description of Photograph(s): Cabin #1 interior, camera facing northeast.

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Photograph Number 0020

Description of Photograph(s): Cabin #4 interior,
camera facing north.

Photograph Number 0021

Description of Photograph(s): Cabin #5 interior,
camera facing north.

Photograph Number 0022

Description of Photograph(s): Cabin #13 interior,
camera facing northwest

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

River Oaks Courts, Medina, Bandera County, Texas

Narrative Description

River Oaks Courts is a 1930s tourist court on State Highway TX-16, one mile east of Medina, Bandera County in the rolling hills of south central Texas. The 11-acre riverfront parcel features ten detached rustic rock-faced cottages configured in a roughly-shaped “U” clustered near the roadway that were constructed between 1935 and 1940 and characterize the privately-owned motor court. The earliest resources on the property include the 1930 bungalow-style residence/office, secondary outbuildings, well, and stone gate pillars. The 2-story fourplex cabin and “River Oaks Courts” metal roadside sign were constructed by new owners circa 1945. Virtually vacant since 1978, buildings evidence common alterations such as infilled car ports, historic-age metal corrugated roofs, porch extensions, and shows signs of deferred maintenance. However, River Oaks Courts retains overall architectural integrity, and individual cottages retain character-defining exterior rock wall masonry and floor plans. All 16 resources on the nominated property are considered Contributing to the district.

Setting and Location

River Oaks Courts encompasses a single, 11-acre parcel on State Highway TX-16 in the unincorporated community of Medina, Bandera County. The small town is approximately 65 miles northwest of San Antonio and 13 miles northwest of Bandera, the county seat. Bandera County is in the Texas Hill Country, a geographic region distinguished by its rolling hills and eroded limestone ridges. Medina is in a valley where the area is generally flat with views of hills in the distance. It is at the junction of the north and west prongs of the Medina River that runs through Bandera County. The nominated district is approximately one mile east of Medina’s commercial district on Broadway St/TX-16 and adjacent properties are primarily residential.

Intact historic-age commercial and residential buildings are near River Oaks Courts in Medina, but there is little documentation of those resources. In the 1970s, the Texas Historical Commission surveyed Medina and photographs recorded 23 historic buildings, including River Oaks Courts (Figures 13 and 18), and most were wood-frame residences. Some of these have since been altered or torn down. Medina includes several intact historic-age commercial and public buildings that, like River Oaks Courts, are rustic-style fieldstone constructed by local builders LeSturgeon Masonry.

River Oaks Courts¹

River Oaks Courts is a 1930s tourist court on an 11-acre riverfront parcel and is comprised of 16 contributing resources. The North Prong of the Medina River is the western property boundary for River Oaks Courts, and like neighboring riverfront parcels, the site slopes gently toward the riverbank. The landscape is grassy with scattered trees and utility lines. River Oaks Courts is configured in a roughly-shaped narrow “U” (Figure 1), and all of the resources are clustered near the highway. Most of the buildings are oriented with the primary elevation facing either (east) toward TX-16 or (west) towards the Medina River; Cabin #7 is the exception facing north. The U-shaped site opens northward with a courtyard, between the cabins and the office. A bungalow-style house, that functioned as the property owner’s residence and motor court office, anchors the north part of the property with the garage, shed, well, and stone gate pillars as the northernmost resources. The metal “River Oaks Courts” sign is at the roadside.

The 16 resources that make up River Oaks Courts were constructed between 1930 and, roughly, 1945. The earliest-built resources (Resources A-E), reflect the property’s original function as a family homestead. The bungalow residence/office, detached garage, utility shed, well, and stone gate pillars were built approximately 1930. Ten

¹ It fitting to nominate the property under the name River Oaks Courts, rather than Stokes Motor Courts, as it was the most commonly used name for the property during the period of significance.

River Oaks Courts, Medina, Bandera County, Texas

buildings (Resources F-N) on the property are 1-story, detached cabins (or cottages) constructed in phases between 1935 and 1940. The cabins, which are the feature of River Oaks Courts, are wood frame Rustic-style stone masonry veneer cottages with chimneys. The fieldstone cladding is made up several varieties of native limestone. All roofs are moderately-pitched with corrugated sheet metal, a historic-age alteration. Entry porches are attached with shed roofs supported by natural wood post porch supports on fieldstone pillars. The cottages range in size from 296 – 985 square feet, and some have attached carports. Two resources reflect ownership changes in the mid-1940s. The 1945 fourplex is an 1,896 square-foot, 2-story vernacular building. Its rustic wood porch supports mimic the other rental cabins, but overall it is distinct amongst the resources. A metal roadside sign, likely erected in 1945, advertises “River Oaks Courts” on TX-16 near the main historic drive-in entrance. The driving public accessed the property via this main entrance. Cabins adjacent to TX-16 also featured private drives.

Although the authors recognize the numbering system historically-assigned to each rental unit, the nomination assigned each resource by an alphabetical, rather than numerical, system to avoid confusion. An inventory is provided on page 14 and a corresponding site map (Map 3) is on page 27.

Each of the following are considered contributing resources to the nominated property, River Oaks Courts:

Residence & Office (1930) – Resource A

(Photo 1, Figure 2)

Constructed in 1930 as the Stokes Family home, it is a one-story 1,274-square-foot wood frame building with Craftsman elements that include a stepped-gable, moderate pitch roof. Although the corrugated roof is likely not original, it is a historic alteration. Additional Craftsman elements include the building’s entry, marked by a partial width hipped roof porch on the east (primary) elevation. It is supported by a battered column on a wood pier base. A second pier is missing its column, and the porch has a wood deck with precast concrete steps. A partial-width flat roof porch on the south elevation is a historic-age alteration that provided a secondary business entrance for patrons to the motor courts. The flat roof porch is supported by square wood columns on a concrete deck with concrete steps, and a light fixture with “OFFICE” hangs from the ceiling; precast concrete steps access the south entrance. The gable and hipped roof sections have slight eaves with exposed rafters, another Craftsman element, and the east gable ends have brackets. Exterior cladding is wood drop siding. Windows are primarily 3/1 wood sash units. Larger windows are in paired or tripled combinations. Smaller 3/1 windows span the north elevation, two flanking the exterior brick chimney. The west elevation has replacement fixed metal windows and paired 1/1 wood sash units. Entry from the east porch faces south and is a single leaf, wood frame and glass door with a wood frame screen door. The south elevation business entry are double wood frame and glass doors with wood framed screen doors. The dwelling is on a pier and beam foundation with an elevation varying from approximately 0.5 feet to 2.5 feet due to the slope of the parcel.

The building was originally-designed as a three-bedroom house with a kitchen, dining room, and living room. There is also a bathroom. Sometime between 1935 and 1940, the owners converted a bedroom to function as an office for customers. The double door entrance on the building’s southern façade was likely installed at that time to accommodate the interior change. An interior Dutch door separates the public office from the private rooms of the residence. The Residence/Office has hardwood floors throughout, but modern vinyl covers it in some rooms. It has plaster walls and ceilings with wood trim. Interior doors are original single leaf wood units. The living room has a brick fireplace that corresponds to the chimney on the north exterior elevation.

The building displays poor condition, but retains original materials—windows, hardwood floors—and its historic layout. The northwest corner roof is missing, exposing the wood roof deck and allowing water infiltration. Both the south and east porches also show damage. The south porch roof is starting to collapse, as is the east porch deck.

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Garage (c. 1930) – Resource B

(Photo 13)

One-story, wood frame garage with a front gable, corrugated metal roof with extended eaves and exposed rafters. The corrugated metal is likely a historic alteration. The garage is clad in shiplap wood siding. The east elevation has double hinged doors and the west elevation has a single leaf wood door. Originally, the west entry provided access to an onsite laundry, however, none of the laundry machinery is extant. The only window is a fixed, wood frame unit. The garage is at grade and has a dirt foundation. The interior has exposed rafters. The garage is in fair to good condition, needing only minor repairs to the siding and doors.

Utility Shed (c. 1930) – Resource C

(Photo 14)

One-story, wood frame utility shed with corrugated metal shed roof with protruding support beams. Currently used as a utility shed, the building appears to be a converted latrine with two distinct sections with corresponding entries. The exterior is clad with shiplap wood siding with some corrugated metal infill. The building is on a pier and beam foundation, elevated approximately 1 foot. One of the interior spaces houses a water heater, with a wood slat door, and the other is likely storage, with no door. It is in poor condition with missing sections of siding and appearing to need foundation repairs.

Well (1930) – Resource D

(Photo 15)

Fieldstone artesian well with a metal cover. It is unclear if the well still supplies water.

Fieldstone Gate Pillars (c. 1930) – Resource E

(Photo 16)

Two fieldstone pillars, likely the gate posts to a fenced yard or garden on the north side of the house. No other fencing or posts remain.

Cabin 1 (1935) – Resource F

(Photo 2, Photo 19, Figure 3)

One-story, 837-square-foot wood frame rustic cabin. The moderate pitch hipped roof is clad with corrugated metal, likely a historic alteration. A low pitch shed roof, also corrugated metal, supported by natural wood posts on fieldstone piers forms a central, partial width porch with a natural deck. The south elevation has a storage area under a corrugated metal shed roof. The area was once a carport that has been enclosed. The exterior cladding for the main cabin is fieldstone. The enclosed carport and an attached water heater storage closet are clad in vertical wood planks. An exterior chimney, also clad in fieldstone, is on the north elevation. Windows are 4/4 wood sash units, with 2/2 fixed wood windows in the storage area infill. Entry doors are original wood and glass units. The cabin is at grade on a concrete slab foundation.

The cabin is one bedroom with a living room, dining room, kitchen, and bathroom. Floors are hardwood, except the kitchen which has tile. Walls are plaster walls and the ceilings appear to be gyp board ceilings. The kitchen has an original farmhouse-style sink. There are no fixtures in the bathroom space. The living room has a fieldstone fireplace with wood mantel, which appears to be non-original. The center of the fireplace has a non-original cameo design on it.

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Cabin 1 is in fair condition, mainly due to disuse and deferred maintenance. There is evidence of water infiltration in the kitchen where some of the ceiling has collapsed.

Cabin 2 (1936) – Resource G

(Photo 3, Figure 3)

At 296-square-foot, Cabin 2 is the smallest wood frame cabin on the property and has a moderate pitch, side gable roof clad with corrugated metal. The exterior fieldstone chimney is on the south elevation. Visible windows are 4/4 wood sash units, with some covered with plywood. Entry doors are original wood and glass units. The cabin is at grade on a concrete slab foundation. The cabin interior is one larger room with divided space for the bathroom. Interior materials are vinyl floor, likely on the concrete slab, with plaster walls, ceilings, and wood trim. The bathroom has original fixtures, including a claw foot tub.

Cabin 2 is in fair to good condition, mainly due to disuse and deferred maintenance. Some of the window framing is rotten and there is broken glass.

Cabin 3 (1936) – Resource H

(Photo 4, Photo 20, Figure 4)

633-square-foot wood frame cabin with a hipped roof and a shed roof carport and storage area on the south elevation. It has a shed roof porch supported by natural wood posts on a low fieldstone wall base. The exterior fieldstone chimney is on the north elevation. Windows are 4/4 wood sash units. Entry doors are original wood and glass units. The cabin is at grade on a concrete slab foundation.

The cabin is one bedroom with a living room, dining room, kitchen, and bathroom. Floors are hardwood. Walls are plaster, although most have wood panel wainscoting and some have wallpaper. The ceilings do not have a finish. The kitchen has an original farmhouse style sink. The bathroom has a pedestal tub and original sink. The living room has a fieldstone fireplace with wood mantel.

Cabin 3 is in fair to good condition, mainly due to disuse and deferred maintenance. Some of the window framing is rotten and there is broken glass.

Cabin 4 and Cabin 5 (1936) – Resource I

(Photo 5, Photo 21-22, Figure 5)

Cabins 4 & 5 are considered one resource as it is a single construction, wood frame building under one roof and are joined by double fieldstone masonry arched carports. Its roof is moderate pitch, side gable corrugated metal roof that spans both cabins and the central, double carport. The carport has two arched openings on the east elevation and the roof is supported by a natural wood post on a fieldstone pier on the west elevation.

The rental units differ in size. Cabin 4, on the north end of the building, is 298 square feet, and Cabin 5, on the south end of the building, is 356 square feet. Both cabin entries consist of a low pitch shed roof, also corrugated metal, supported by natural wood posts on fieldstone piers that form a central, partial width porch with a natural deck. All windows are 4/4 wood sash units and entry doors are original wood and glass units. The building is at grade with concrete slab foundations under the cabin units themselves. Both cabins have exterior fieldstone chimneys – Cabin 4's located on the north elevation and Cabin 5's on the west elevation.

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The interiors of both cabins are similar in design with a larger room with divided space for a bathroom. All interior materials are an asbestos vinyl floor, likely on the concrete slab, with plaster walls, ceilings, and wood trim. The bathroom has original fixtures, including a claw foot tub in each cabin.

Cabins 4 and 5 are in good condition.

Cabin 6 (1936) – Resource J

(Photo 6, Figure 6)

456-square-foot wood frame cabin with a moderate pitch side gable roof clad with corrugated metal and exposed rafters. The partial width porch is inset under the main roof with a concrete deck. Windows are 2/2 wood sash units. Entry doors are original wood and glass units. The cabin is at grade on a concrete slab foundation. While clad in fieldstone, Cabin 6 does not have a fieldstone chimney.

Cabin 6 is one bedroom with a living room, dining room, kitchen, and bathroom. Floors are vinyl with plaster walls and ceilings. The kitchen has an original farmhouse style sink. The bathroom has a pedestal tub and original sink. Cabin 6 is in good condition.

Cabin 7 (c. 1940) – Resource K

(Photo 7, Photo 23, Figure 6)

985-square-foot wood frame cabin with an attached portico under a gable roof supported by a fieldstone arch with a concrete deck. The east elevation has a carport under a shed roof supported by natural wood posts with later wood infill on a low fieldstone wall base. The exterior fieldstone chimney is on the west elevation. Windows are 1/1 wood sash units. Entry doors are original wood and glass units. The cabin is elevated less than 1 foot on a pier and beam foundation.

The cabin is two-bedroom with a living room, dining room, kitchen, and bathroom. Floors are hardwood, walls are plaster, with non-historic wainscoting applied in most rooms, and the ceilings has been replaced. The kitchen has an original farmhouse style sink. In the bathroom, the fixtures and floor have been removed and the wood beam foundation is visible. Kitchen fixtures have also been removed. The living room has a fieldstone fireplace with wood mantel.

Cabin 7 is in fair condition due to the exposed foundation in the bathroom.

Cabin 8 (c. 1940) – Resource L

(Photo 8, Figure 7)

370-square-foot wood frame cabin with a moderate pitch front gable roof clad with corrugated metal. An attached gable roof supported by wood posts forms an entry porch. The porch has a concrete deck and there is a wood ramp attached under a wood shed roof. The exterior fieldstone chimney is on the north elevation. Windows are 4/4 wood and 1/1 wood sash units. Entry doors are wood panel units. The cabin elevation varies from approximately 1 foot to grade. The cabin interior is one larger room with divided space for the bathroom. Interior materials are an asbestos vinyl floor in the entry, likely on the concrete slab, with plaster walls, bead board ceilings, and wood trim. Some of the walls have non-historic wood paneling. The bathroom possibly has original features. Cabin 8 faces the river.

Cabin 8 is in fair condition due to disuse and differed maintenance. Some of the window framing is rotten and there is broken glass.

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Cabin 9 (c. 1940) – Resource M

(Photo 9, Figure 7)

614-square-foot wood frame cabin with a moderate pitch front gable roof clad with corrugated metal. Originally similar in size to Cabin 8, the shed roof addition on the south elevation added square footage. It is unclear when the addition was added, however the materials and the exposed rafters of the addition suggest it is a historic-age alteration. An attached gable roof supported by wood posts forms an entry porch and there is a shed roof extension of the porch roof spanning the front of the addition. The porch has a concrete deck and the area under the extension appears to have been a flowerbed. The exterior materials are fieldstone masonry (original structure) and wood lap siding (historic addition). A set of paired windows in the addition are 4/4 wood sash units. Plywood or screens obscure some windows. A fieldstone chimney is visible above the roofline, and it was likely an exterior chimney prior to the addition. Entry doors are wood panel units. The cabin elevation varies from approximately 1 foot to grade. A small storage closet was added to the north exterior, made of wood planks. It is in disrepair. The cabin interior originally was one large room with a fieldstone fireplace and a divided space for what was originally the bathroom. It has been converted to a closet and none of the original fixtures remain. The addition adds a small storage room and a work room. Interior materials are a wood floor, except in the entry which is vinyl tile. Other surfaces are plaster walls, bead board ceilings, and wood trim. Some of the walls have non-historic wood paneling. The bathroom possibly has original features. Cabin 9 faces the river.

Cabin 9 is in fair to good condition, mainly due to disuse and deferred maintenance. Some of the window framing is rotten and there is broken glass.

Cabin 10 (c. 1940) – Resource N

(Photo 10, Figure 8)

521-square-foot wood frame cabin with moderate pitch stepped front gable roof is clad with corrugated metal. The west elevation has an attached flat extended roof, an extended porch, which has partially collapsed. The lower gable is over a carport with wooden slat doors. The carport walls have been infilled, creating a garage. Unlike the other rental cabins, the exterior cladding for Cabin 10 is a mix of wood lap and wood drop siding. The west elevation has a stone chimney. Most of the windows are 2/2 wood sash units, with fixed wood units in the infill. Entry doors are wood panel units. The cabin is at grade on a concrete slab foundation.

The cabin interior is one bedroom, with a kitchen, living room, and bath room. Interior materials are a wood floor, with bead board walls and ceiling. It appears the original bathroom sink is extant; however, no other historic fixtures are present. Cabin 10 faces the river.

Cabin 10 is in fair condition. The west addition needs to be removed and windows repaired.

Fourplex, Units 11-14 (1945) – Resource O

(Photo 11, Photo 24, Figure 9)

Two-story, 1,896-square-foot concrete masonry unit vernacular fourplex building that contains four rental units (Cabins 11-14). The low pitch side gable roof is clad with corrugated metal. Eaves have an overhang on the gable ends and exposed rafters on the other sides. A full width, two-story porch is inset under the main roof and wraps around the north elevation. The porch roof and balcony deck are supported mostly by cedar posts with a stone column on the north elevation and a cedar post on a stone pier on the northwest corner. The first level porch has a concrete deck while the second-floor porch is wood. A straight run wood stair on the north elevation provides access to the upper floor. Rustic cedar logs form a railing for the upper porch between the support posts. Windows

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are 1/1 wood sash units, some covered by plywood. Entry doors are wood panel units with wood frame screen doors. The building is at grade on a concrete slab foundation.

The building contains four cabins; two units on each floor with mirrored floorplans, all with entry doors from the porches. The entrances face the courtyard. Each cabin is 474 square feet with a bedroom, kitchen, and bathroom. The interior has plaster walls, unfinished rough wood ceilings, and stained wood trim.

The fourplex is in fair condition. The masonry and cedar post supports are solid. Some of the windows have broken or missing glass that needs to be repaired and there is some water infiltration.

“River Oaks Courts” Metal Roadside Sign (c. 1945) – Resource P
(Photo 12)

Metal roadside sign with rounded edges supported by a round metal post. “River Oaks Courts” appears in faded block letters. The word “Vacancy” is on the lower section of the sign underneath an electronic sign box for the word “No” to appear when the property was full. A concrete curb forms a large garden bed around sign, but overgrown trees and bushes obscure it. The sign is in fair condition, needing refurbishment and repainting.

Integrity

River Oaks Courts retains excellent integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. It retains a high degree of integrity of location and setting as it remains sited between TX-16 and the Medina River. It retains integrity of setting as River Oaks Courts is still a locally-owned motor court at the edge of a small town along a Depression-era highway in a predominantly-rural area. Further, the overall site plan, with cabins facing the road and the river, and two larger buildings anchoring each end of the central courtyard, remains intact along with drives and circulation patterns. The buildings exhibit excellent integrity of design, workmanship, and materials in the fieldstone masonry, rustic wood porch supports, and historic floor plans. Minor alterations to building interiors include the construction of closets, application of wood paneling, and instillation of window air conditioning units, which do not compromise the buildings’ integrity of design, workmanship, and materials. The motor court’s rough “U” configuration, carports, and historic signage demonstrate its association and feeling as prewar tourist court and is still easily recognizable as such.

River Oaks Courts, Medina, Bandera County, Texas

Table 1. Inventory Table
(see Map 3 on page 27)

Resource #	Name	Type	Status (C/NC)
A	Residence & Office	Building	C
B	Garage	Building	C
C	Utility Shed	Building	C
D	Well	Structure	C
E	Pillars	Structure	C
F	Cabin 1	Building	C
G	Cabin 2	Building	C
H	Cabin 3	Building	C
I	Cabin 4 & 5	Building	C
J	Cabin 6	Building	C
K	Cabin 7	Building	C
L	Cabin 8	Building	C
M	Cabin 9	Building	C
N	Cabin 10	Building	C
O	Fourplex	Building	C
P	Sign	Object	C

River Oaks Courts, Medina, Bandera County, Texas

Statement of Significance

River Oaks Courts, first called Stokes Motor Courts, is an excellent example of pre-World War II tourist lodging in Medina, Bandera County, Texas that reflects the explosion of “mom and pop” roadside businesses during the 1930s. Local entrepreneur Brown H. Stokes developed his roadside homestead into a family-run motor court, called Stokes Tourist Courts, in 1936. Over a four-year-period, LeSturgeon Masonry constructed ten fieldstone cottages, many with attached carports, clustered near the highway on Stokes’ property. The spatial configuration, home-like accommodations, and Rustic-style of Stokes Motor Courts conformed to national trends in motor court design of the era. In 1943, new owners changed its name to River Oaks Courts, after the tree-lined Medina River, and added a 2-story, 4-unit cabin and a metal roadside sign. The additions, completed in 1945, reflected the evolution of the tourist lodging industry after World War II. River Oaks Courts operated as a motel and long-term rental property under several families through 1969. It is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion A in the area of Commerce and Criterion C in the area of Architecture as an excellent example of a Depression Era motor court that is reflected in its rustic style and form. The period of significance begins in 1930 with the construction of the Stokes Family home and ends in 1969, the current 50-year cut-off.

Medina, Bandera County

The first permanent Anglo community near Medina was established in present-day Bandera, Bandera County in the spring of 1853. In 1856, the State of Texas formed Bandera County out of territory that was formerly Bexar County, and the town of Bandera was named the county seat.² Other settlements at the time included Castroville (1844) and Camp Verde (1856). However, the county remained sparsely populated because, except for a militia, there was no federal protection for Anglo citizens from Native American groups.

Following the Civil War and into the 20th century, the principle industry in Bandera County was the wool and mohair industry because the rocky hill country topography was ideal for sheep and goat raising. However, prices for those commodities declined sharply during the Great Depression. After World War II, Bandera County saw a rise in tourism on area guest ranches. The county’s population also grew because of suburbanization and the westward spread of San Antonio’s metropolitan area. The town of Bandera is the only incorporated town within the county; it incorporated in 1964.³

Medina (historically called Medina City) is small, agrarian, and unincorporated town. Anglo settlers first moved to the area in the 1860s, and shingle makers established a sawmill there in 1865.⁴ The town of Medina, named for Medina River, developed in the 1880s with the establishment of its post office, several businesses, a public school, and the Medina United Methodist Church.⁵ The first buildings in Medina were constructed from lumber, and buildings constructed from fieldstone appeared early in the 20th century. By 1914, the population for Medina was 450 and its churches, schools, and general stores also served area cattle, Angora goat, and sheep ranchers.

² Vivian Elizabeth Smyrl, “Medina, TX,” *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed July 11, 2017, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hlm52>.

³ “Bandera, Texas History,” Bear Springs Blossom Nature Conservancy. Accessed September 15, 2017 <http://www.keepbanderabeautiful.org/banderahistory.html>.

⁴ Vivian Elizabeth Smyrl, “Medina, TX,” *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed July 11, 2017, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hlm52>.

⁵ Thelma Grant, “History of Medina UMC, TX: 1881-1981,” Medina United Methodist Church. Accessed July 17, 2017 <https://medinaumc.wordpress.com/2008/12/10/history-of-medina-umc-tx/>.

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The topography of the Texas Hill Country challenged Medina's growth in the first decades of the 20th century because the steep hills made transportation to other cities difficult. Medina's economy depended on trade, primarily in mohair and wool, and the roadway to the Bandera and Kerr county seats was integral to sustaining that industry. The winding, earthen road that became TX-16 (then called "Medina Road") was particularly perilous. With steep hills, sharp turns, and drop offs, the road was dangerous to early travelers transporting commodities to market in Kerrville. At the time, Kerrville was one of the state's leading markets for wool and mohair, and Medina ranchers were keenly interested in improving this passageway. Subsequently, one goal for the Medina Chamber of Commerce was to improve roads between Medina and larger cities nearby. Between 1926 and 1929, the Texas Highway Department graded and paved 12 miles of Highway 81 from Bandera to Medina. Work on State Highway 16 began in 1925, and the paved 2-lane, winding 24-mile stretch of road from Medina to Kerrville was finished in 1944.⁶

At the outset of the Great Depression, Medina citizens were optimistic about the town's prospects. The *Medina Light* began its weekly publication on November 7, 1930 with a banner headline that proclaimed Medina as the "Mecca of the Hills."⁷ Its editor, W.C. Swinney, advocated for improvements to education, better roads, and encouraged tourism. The economic recession, however, severely impacted the wool and mohair trade, and Medina's population subsequently dropped to 250 as people moved away in search of employment. As wool and mohair markets improved in 1935, the community also recovered.

In the 1930s and 1940s, tourism became an economic pillar of Medina, the larger county, and the surrounding Hill Country. Visitors enjoyed camping and swimming at the Medina River, hiking the hills, and viewed scenic beauty spots along the way. Although Medina was not necessarily the destination, it was a stop along the way to dude ranches in Bandera, nearby Medina Lake, and Schreiner State Park. Even before its completion, TX-16 between Medina and Kerrville was advertised as destination drive that was "especially interesting and reminds one of Colorado."⁸ In 1936, one auto tourist described the journey:

[From Kerrville] we passed over winding roads through a wonderful country where small houses nestle among the lovely hills, at the foot surrounded by trees and shrubbery as pretty as can be seen anywhere. As we motor along, goats, not black cats, cross the road... We motored on up and down and over winding roads with rock curbing on both sides, making us feel a bit safer, finally coming to a sharp curve and then a very steep hill. We held our breath so as not to disturb the driver, and we came to the top [of Medina Hill] and over the Divide. It was a thrilling wonderful trip... Twenty-one miles out we crossed the Medina River on a low crossing, reaching the suburbs of Medina, with their pretty little rock houses. Medina is a very nice place. We came to a camp grounds where an encampment had been held and then on to Highland Waters.⁹

Medina's proximity to the river also made it vulnerable to periodic floods, with particularly devastating effects in 1900, 1919, and 1978. The August 1978 flood occurred as remnants of Tropical Storm Amelia produced approximately 30 inches of rain in 72 hours. The flood waters were great enough to wash away many centuries-old cypress trees along the river banks, and properties like River Oaks Courts flooded. All told, the 1978 flood resulted

⁶ Dot Ferguson Hatfield, "Medina...A Delightful Retreat," pamphlet, pg. 42-43.

⁷ The *Medina Light* was published November 7, 1930 to January 2, 1941.

⁸ "A Beautiful Scenic Drive For Sunday..." *Kerrville Mountain Sun*, August 13, 1936.

⁹ As there were no other tourist camps in Medina, it is probable that the camp grounds mentioned in the article is the River Oaks Courts, which likely offered that service in addition to rental cottages. "Summer Visitors Delighted With Scenery and Climate Afforded By Kerrville and Hill Country," *Kerrville Mountain Sun*, September 10, 1936.

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in 33 deaths, 154 injuries, and more than \$110 million in property damage over a 17-county area.¹⁰ Since the 1978 flood, Medina-area farmers diversified their crops, and apple farming became a productive agribusiness. Medina, the “Apple Capital of Texas,” annually attracts tourism for the locally-made apple products, like apple ice-cream, and is an unincorporated area with a population of approximately 500 citizens.¹¹

River Oaks Courts (Stokes Motor Courts)

Stokes Motor Courts (Stokes Tourist Courts, Stokes Tourist Camp), 1936-1943

Brown H. Stokes (1897-1940), a successful local entrepreneur, opened the Stokes Motor Courts (later River Oaks Courts), the first tourist courts in Medina, in 1936. He was born on April 17, 1897 in Coleman County, Texas to Kenchen King Stokes and Emma Seale Stokes. In 1900, Kenchen moved his family to the West Prong community, four miles from Medina, where he rented (and later purchased) ranch land. The Stokes children, including Brown, helped their father grow corn, cotton, and raise livestock.¹² In 1917, Brown Stokes married Medina-raised Ora “Maud” Kelley (1897-1987), and the couple briefly moved to Port Arthur where he worked at an oil refinery.¹³ Two years later, Brown and Maud returned to Medina with their first son, King. By 1927, they had three more children: Terry, Brown Jr., and Ople.¹⁴

Between 1920 and 1930, Stokes transitioned from laborer to businessman. Upon his return to Medina from Port Arthur, the Stokes Family lived with Maud’s mother, and Stokes worked on a nearby ranch. In 1923, he and a partner saved enough money to start a grocery store that served Medina for five decades.¹⁵ The B.H. Stokes Store was located on Broadway (TX 16), Medina’s primary commercial thoroughfare. It advertised: “B.H. Stokes has dry goods, and groceries fine. He will sell them for cash or on time. He will also buy your wool and mohair. The price he pays is always fair.”¹⁶ The wool and mohair trade were particularly lucrative to Stokes’ business and the larger Medina community. He employed his brother, Bill, to freight the raw materials from Medina to markets in Kerrville and Comfort, by way of present-day TX-16, where they sold the fiber to some of the state’s leading wool and mohair buyers.¹⁷

In 1930, Stokes purchased an 11-acre riverfront parcel with profits from the B.H. Stokes store, and he constructed a three-bedroom bungalow-style home there. The *Medina Light* inaugural edition announced its completion on November 7, 1930, saying, “Mr. Stokes now has one of the most modern homes in this country. He also has had an

¹⁰ E.E. Schroeder, B.C. Massey, and Kidd M. Waddell, “Floods in Central Texas, August 1978,” United States Geological Survey, Department of the Interior. U.S. Geological Survey Open-File Report 79-682, 14.

¹¹ Vivian Elizabeth Smyrl, “Medina, TX,” *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed July 11, 2017, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hlm52>. Uploaded on June 15, 2010. Published by the Texas State Historical Association.

¹² Dot Ferguson Hatfield, “Medina...A Delightful Retreat,” 41.

¹³ “World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918,” United States, Selective Service System. National Archives and Records Administration. Accessed via Ancestry.com.

¹⁴ King Henry Stokes (1918-2006), Terry Stokes (1920-2014), Brown “Pooch” H. Stokes, Jr. (1923-2007), and Ople Stokes Boyle (1927-present); “1920 United States Federal Census,” Records of the Bureau of the Census, United States Department of Commerce. Available via Ancestry.com.

¹⁵ Stokes started the grocery store with David Tallman in 1923 but sold his interest the following year. In 1925, however, Stokes and Henry Lewis bought out Tallman. One year later, he bought out Lewis, and the grocery remained in the Stokes Family until the 1970s. *Bandera County History*, 538.

¹⁶ *The Medina Light*, November 20, 1930.

¹⁷ *Bandera County History*, 539; “Ranching Life In & Around Medina with Recollections of Terry Stokes,” in *The Bandera County Historian*, Summer 2013; “B.H. Stokes Buildded (sic) Wisely in Medina,” *Medina Light*, December 14, 1939.

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artesian well drilled which gives such a strong flow, that it requires no reservoir, as the flow is strong enough to force the water over the entire place.”¹⁸ The small homestead was conveniently located one mile west of his general store in Medina and along the Kerrville Road (later TX-16), his primary trade commute. Early improvements to the property included a garage, and he likely cultivated the land to support the family’s personal needs. The Stokes children enjoyed growing up next to the Medina River that provided them an cypress-shaded retreat for swimming, fishing, and camping.

Stokes’ business ventures in the 1930s also improved the quality of life for people in Medina. In 1931, he purchased and revived a defunct, turn-of-the-20th-century ice-making machine, a the first for the small community. Installed behind the Stokes Store, Stokes initially powered it with a wood-fueled steam roller, and in short-time produced “first class, Medina-made” ice blocks.¹⁹ Several months later, he bought a Dynamo generator and installed a light plant next to the ice plant. Stokes’ investment provided the first dependable electric lighting to Medina schools and churches.²⁰

The *Medina Light* described Stokes as one who kept apace with progress, and whose gifted business ability put him “several jumps ahead of development.”²¹ Indeed, Brown advocated for, and personally-invested in, infrastructure projects, tourism, and education. As a Chamber of Commerce member, he served on the highway committee that encouraged state officials to expand and improve the road between Medina and Kerrville. Stokes had a personal stake in highway work because Kerrville Road ran adjacent his property, and an improved road would make his trade commute easier.

Many believed an improved highway would encourage tourism through Medina. At the time, local boosters marketed the town, self-dubbed the “Mecca of the Hills” or “Queen of the Hills,” as an all-year resort for hiking, hunting, and fishing or bathing “among the sighing cypress trees.”²² In 1932, an article in the *Medina Light* noted, however, the absence of local tourist camp grounds or cottages to support this desired economy. It touted the tourist camp business as a “golden opportunity,” that awaited young entrepreneur smart enough to invest in cabins for the scores of motoring tourists driving through Texas and Medina.²³ Whether the article influenced Stokes, an entrepreneurial-minded person, to start his tourist lodging business venture is not known. The article was circulated several years before Stokes constructed cottages, but a Medina highway map indicated that, by 1936, Stokes had a “tourist camp” on his property.²⁴

Stokes was also leading voice for improving education for Medina children. He and others urged the community to raise funds to construct a new school building, where the Stokes children were educated. Built in 1933 by Hough LeSturgeon, the completed fieldstone edifice provided Medina students modern science curriculum and primary education. As a member of the school board in 1934-35, Stokes promoted agricultural vocational studies to educate the next-generation of farmers about conservation-minded cultivation. That year, the district hired University of A&M agricultural teacher Robert R. Tippett to start such a program in Medina.

¹⁸ *Medina Light*, November 7, 1930.; “1930 United States Federal Census,” Records of the Bureau of the Census, United States Department of Commerce. Available via Ancestry.com.

¹⁹ *Kerrville Mountain Sun*, May 28, 1931; Stokes Store Advertisement, *Medina Light*, May 28, 1931.

²⁰ *Medina Light*, October 22, 1931.

²¹ “B.H. Stokes Buildded Wisely in Medina,” *Medina Light*, December 12, 1939.

²² *Medina Light*, October 22, 1931.

²³ “Golden Opportunities,” *Medina Light*, September 1, 1932.

²⁴ It is possible Stokes completed the first six tourist cottages by the time the highway department distributed the map. It is just as likely that Stokes rented his riverfront land as camping grounds for overnight tourists for several years before his built the first cabin, and the map simply referred to that camping function.

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Tippet's employment was the impetus that started Stokes' next business, Stokes Motor Courts, which shaped the development of the current nominated property. Although Medina's economy improved in the years immediately following the Great Depression, home building was slow to revive.²⁵ In 1935, when Tippet was unable to find a suitable rental home, Stokes hired local contractor Hough LeSturgeon to construct one fieldstone cottage on his 11-acre property for the new teacher. Soon after, Stokes contracted for four more cottages that were completed in early 1936, and he finished the sixth cabin by August. The six cottages became the first rental cabins, and Stokes advertised short and long-term leases.²⁶ At various times, the business name alternated between Stokes Tourist Camp, Stokes Tourist Courts, and Stokes Motor Courts. Although those names reflected larger trends in the motor courts industry, the three names were used interchangeably between 1935 and 1943.²⁷ By 1940, Stokes Motor Courts boasted ten fieldstone cottages.²⁸

Like other family-owned motels of the day, the Stokes were responsible for all maintenance and daily work to operate the business. During this period, Brown renovated an entry on the south elevation of the Stokes' home for public access. He converted an interior bedroom to an office with a Dutch-door that separated the room from the rest of the home. In addition to managing the business of rentals, Maud and the children washed dishes and laundry for each cabin. Visitors to Stokes Motor Courts were attracted to its picturesque riverside setting. They enjoyed fishing and swimming in the Medina River where Stokes installed a diving board and a rope swing. Each cottage was comfortable and fully-furnished with a kitchenette, bathroom, and fireplace.²⁹

On March 22, 1940, Medina citizens and his family were shocked when Stokes died in a car accident. The grief-stricken community conducted his funeral at the Medina High School auditorium to accommodate the nearly 600 people in attendance. Following the service, he was buried in West Prong Cemetery.³⁰ The city mourned the passing of the gifted businessman who "had faith and confidence in our town's future and desired to help Medina grow.[Stokes] had broad vision,...courageous spirit, and the ability to bring these visions to reality."³¹ Maud took over full ownership and management of all Stokes' businesses after his death. In 1943, she sold Stokes Motor Courts but operated the Stokes (IGA) store with her children for several more decades.

²⁵ "Making Improvements," *Medina Light*, January 2, 1936.

²⁶ The 1940 census indicates six of the ten cottages were rented to long term tenants who paid \$16/month. Of the six families who lived there, five individuals were public school teachers (including Tippet and his wife), one person was a mechanic, and two women were unemployed widows. Ancestry.com, *1940 United States Federal Census* [database on-line], Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012, https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?db=2442&h=157202891&indiv=try&o_vc=Record:OtherRecord&rhSource=6224.

²⁷ A 1941 postcard, printed by the Stokes Family, identified the business as "Stokes Tourist Camp." The term "camp," was an early industry term of the 1920s that referred to a period of the tourist business wherein motorists literally camped on grounds at private and publicly-owned campsites. By 1930, many business owners shifted from names like "tourist camp" to "court" to better reflect the changing trend in roadside accommodations. For more information see, Warren James Belasco *Americans on the Road: From Autocamp to Motel, 1910-1945*.

²⁸ Brown constructed the sixth cottage for "Mrs. Nixon," who taught Home Economics in 1936. The 1940 census listed three additional public-school educators living in rental cottages: George Goosby, and Mitchell and Alice Lovelace. *Medina Light*, August 20, 1936.

²⁹ Oral interviews with Ople Stokes Boyle, Helen Hicks, and Cecil LeSturgeon. August 9, 2017.

³⁰ Mrs. Sandee Vannatter, "Stokes, Brown and Maude," Bandera County History Book Committee. *History of Bandera County, Texas*. Dallas: Curtis Media Corporation, 1986, pg. 538-539.

³¹ "Brown H. Stokes Found Dead Near Kerrville," *Medina Light*, March 28, 1940.

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River Oaks Courts (1943 - present)

From 1943 through 1978, River Oaks Courts remained a tourist motel as it underwent several exchanges in ownership and a few improvements. William C. and Bertha Horger, with partner J.P. Slater, purchased Stokes Motor Courts from Maud in 1943.³² To reflect a change in ownership, they changed the business name to River Oaks Courts after the cypress-lined Medina River. The Horger's moved into the 1930 bungalow, and Slater lived one of the fieldstone cottages until he sold his share of the business the next year.³³ In 1945, the Horger's built a two-story cabin with four individual units and erected a roadside "River Oaks Courts" metal sign on TX 16. The new construction communicated the owners' hopes for a new era in the business's success. The next year, however, the Horger's sold River Oaks Courts to Theola Arnott who, in turn, sold it to Guy and Alta Stroup in 1948.³⁴

When the Stroup's purchased River Oaks Courts, the transaction included all interior furnishings and linens. The inventory revealed the comfortable accommodations afforded to visitors of the motel. Each cottage resembled a small, neatly furnished home complete with quilted and chenille bedcovers, mirrored dressers topped with dresser scarfs, armchairs and rocking chairs, chrome dining tables, iceboxes, cooking pans and utensils, bed and bath linens, and more. The Stroup's marketed the lodgings in new postcards that advertised "kitchenettes, refrigerators, Simmons mattresses, swimming and picnicking" (Figure 17).³⁵ From 1954 to 1969, Lela and Alfred Henry owned River Oaks Courts and operated it for long and short-term rentals, like Stokes had done in the 1930s.³⁶ The Henry's sold the property to Frances Harlee in 1970, and Harlee sold it to Joyce and Theo James in 1974.

In the 1970s, River Oaks Courts gradually shifted from tourist lodging to majority long-term leasing. Although the nature and timeline of the shift is not definite, the decline of its tourist business was likely the result of several factors. The state and federal government began construction on Interstate 10, a major east-west highway, in 1959. The I-10 stretch from San Antonio to Kerrville completely bypassed Bandera County, and tourists were encouraged to travel the four-lane highway rather than the meandering state roads, like TX-16 through Medina. It is also a reflection of the changing hotel/motel business in the latter half of the 20th century when large hotel chains opened motels along the new federal highways, pulling clientele from independently-owned tourist courts like River Oaks Courts. In 1978, a flood of the Medina River devastated the local community, and River Oaks Courts was among the many properties damaged. A photograph of Ople Stokes, the youngest of Brown and Maud Stokes children, demonstrated where the water level peaked at 48 inches in one of the cottages. Following that event, long-term renters sporadically inhabited River Oaks Courts, and the pattern of limited occupation continued through the first decades of the next century.³⁷ It is fitting to nominate the property under the name River Oaks Courts, rather than Stokes Motor Courts, as it was the most commonly used name for the property during the period of significance.

Motor Courts

In the 1930s, increased car ownership, easier travel opportunities, and the relatively low-costs associated with car travel created circumstances under which motor courts could grow and flourish. Additionally, the Texas highway

³² Merry Langalais, "Farming and Ranching Legacy in Bandera county," *Bandera County Historian*, Bandera County Historical Commission. Summer 2013, 9.

³³ Oral interviews with Ople Stokes Boyle, Helen Hicks, and Cecil LeSturgeon. August 9, 2017.

³⁴ Bandera County Deed Records, Volume 76, pages 332-333. Filed August 23, 1946.

³⁵ River Oaks Courts postcard, n.d.

³⁶ Bandera County Deed Records, Volume 95, pages 5-6. Filed December 2, 1954.

³⁷ Merry Langalais, "Farming and Ranching Legacy in Bandera county," *Bandera County Historian*, Bandera County Historical Commission. Summer 2013, 9.

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system improved vastly during the Great Depression, and state's highway department took advantage of federal relief programs to expand and improve the existing road system. Infrastructure improvements included innovative engineering to improve paving, grading, and erosion prevention on highways in parts of Texas, like Medina, that did not previously have advanced roads. Improvements, like roadside parks and beautification efforts, were also completed to encourage tourism to a maturing generation of motorists.³⁸

Motor courts evolved from municipal roadside camp sites as clever entrepreneurs saw an opportunity to provide safer and more comfortable overnight accommodations for travelers.³⁹ Unlike hotels of this era, motor courts were specifically designed for auto travelers and included a variety of amenities specific to automobiles including parking, carports, and often gasoline pumps.⁴⁰ While hotels were typically constructed in larger towns with multiple stories and shared walls, motor courts are characterized by their location along state and US highways and their construction as separate, one-story cabins for each guest and common open space. Motor courts gained popularity by combining the lower costs of camping with the privacy and comforts of a hotel. These style accommodations made it possible for families to take vacations and for businessmen to bring their wives because the costs were so much lower compared to hotels.⁴¹ Low overhead and the attraction of lower rates kept motor courts hobbling along during the Great Depression, while larger hotels were crippled by the lost business as businesses and families economized their budgets.⁴² Motor courts were also marketed as a way to supplement incomes in rural areas during the summer months.⁴³ The American Automobile Association in 1933 estimated that there were more than thirty thousand motor courts in operation in the US.⁴⁴

Motor courts evolved to have many common, well-considered planning approaches, including U-shaped, crescent-shaped, or parallel lines of cabins facing the highway. The office was typically located at the center of the motor court and was constructed more distinctly than the guest cabins to provide additional place-making and visual cues to guests. Many of the larger motor courts utilized regional heritage architecture and landscaping to emphasize the unique qualities of the area and that business. Interior décor also became important as a way for each motor court to distinguish itself and for guests to become more comfortable and feel more at home, primarily through furnishing, rugs, artwork, and small kitchen appliances or even kitchenettes.⁴⁵

In the post-war period, travelers began searching for consistency and reliability in their accommodations. Motor courts became known as motels, as a hybridization of "motor court" and "hotel," and the industry saw increased professionalization of their trade. Professional organizations for motel owners published guides for running their businesses and attempted to implement standards for cleanliness and reputability. The demands and expectations

³⁸ Hardy-Heck-Moore, Inc. (HHM). "The Development of Highways in Texas: a Historic Context of the Bankhead Highway and Other Historic Named Highways. I. Statewide Historic Context." Texas Historical Commission. 2014. <http://www.thc.state.tx.us/public/upload/preserve/survey/highway/Section%20I.%20Statewide%20Historic%20Context.pdf>, 138-39.

³⁹ Chester H. Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile: American Roadside Architecture*. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1985, 175.

⁴⁰ Andrew Wood. *Motel Americana*. San Jose State University. 1995. Accessed November 22, 2017 <http://www.sjsu.edu/faculty/wooda/motel/history/>.

⁴¹ Belasco, Warren James. *Americans on the Road: from Autocamp to Motel, 1910-1945*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1979, 139.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 142-143.

⁴³ John A. Jakle, Keith A. Sculle, and Jefferson S. Rogers. *The Motel in America*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 177.

⁴⁵ Chester H. Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile: American Roadside Architecture*. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1985, 175-176.

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from consumers, as seen through these business guides, made it cost-prohibitive for small farmers to start a motel on their property in order to supplement their income. Instead, running a motel was framed as the sole income-source for small business owners. Where independently-owned motels made up 98% of motel options in 1948, their market share dropped to 59% by 1972. Chain motels, starting with Holiday Inn in 1952, provided consumers with standardization, set expectations, and a known price became the consumer preference.⁴⁶ Independently-owned lodging, which includes motels, hotels, franchise hotels, bed and breakfasts, and other lodging options, make up just 1/3 of the lodging market in 2017.⁴⁷

Motel construction also differed from motor court construction. Where motor courts maintained discrete buildings for guests, motels tended to be 1- or 2-story buildings facing parking. Like hotels, motels reverted to shared walls to be more efficient with construction costs. Many early motel chains, such as Howard Johnson, were attached to restaurants, rather than the owners' residence and office or gasoline pumps. Adjacency to a major thoroughfare was still an important consideration, however, the form became a hybrid between motor court and hotel.

Motor courts, as a contrast to hotels and motels, tended to be small businesses with local owners who lived on site. As the Interstate Highway system was constructed in the 1950s, motor court owners found their businesses bypassed by the new highways as well as outpaced by motel and hotel chains.⁴⁸ Many motor courts went out of business, and there are only a handful of operational motor courts remaining from this period in Texas.⁴⁹

Architectural Significance and Conclusion

River Oaks Courts demonstrates the basic principles of 1930s motor court design using materials unique to the community and made locally-popular by its builder, Hough LeSturgeon. **Bruce "Hough" LeSturgeon** was born August 3, 1909 to Bert R. and Delia Sturges LeSturgeon in San Antonio, and the family relocated to Medina the same year. After graduating from Medina High School in 1927, he returned to San Antonio where he enrolled in Draughton Business School and worked for a general contractor, teaching himself to read blueprints at night. LeSturgeon later recalled that he "started building with rocks when the economy crashed and tossed him out of the job for which he had trained."⁵⁰

The exigency of the Great Depression invariably laid the foundation for LeSturgeon Masonry, a now three-generation masonry construction business. In the early 1930s, LeSturgeon convinced his brothers to build a new home for their parents. He chose native fieldstone—an assortment of local red, brown, and cream limestone derived from the Edwards Plateau—as a cheap, abundant, and durable material from which to construct the house. "The stones came from all over the county," he once said, "You'd have to pay for them now, but back then they had a lot out in the pastures and you could have them just for hauling them off."⁵¹ LeSturgeon went on to build "anything that anyone needed and would pay for," and the resulting fences, fireplaces, and buildings all shared his signature

⁴⁶ John A. Jakle, Keith A. Sculle, and Jefferson S. Rogers. *The Motel in America*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996, chapter 3.

⁴⁷ Callie Johnson and Jan Freitag, "Why Independent Hotels are Thriving," *Lodging*, March 17, 2017. Accessed March 31, 2018 <http://lodgingmagazine.com/why-independent-hotels-are-thriving/>

⁴⁸ Andrew Wood, "The Rise and Fall of the American Motel," *Smithsonian Magazine*, June 30, 2017. Accessed November 22, 2017 <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/twilight-mom-and-pop-motel-180963895/>

⁴⁹ Kathryn Jones, "Retro Retreats." *Texas Highways*. May 2015. Accessed November 22, 2017 <http://www.texashighways.com/travel/item/7832-retro-retreats-texas-motor-courts-tourist-camps>

⁵⁰ Stephanie Park, "Medina's Pioneer Rock Moves to His Heavenly Building Site," *Bandera County Courier*, May 28, 2009.

⁵¹ Oral interviews with Ople Boyle, Helen Hicks, and Cecil LeSturgeon. August 9, 2017; Phil Billnitzer, "The Frontier Times Museum: Strong as the Hands that Built Them," Frontier Times Museum, <http://www.frontiertimesmuseum.org/lesturgeon.html>, accessed August 1, 2018.

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rustic, multi-colored fieldstone aesthetic.⁵² Petrified wood, fossils, cave formations, and other odd shaped stones were also utilized in LeSturgeon's buildings. His company constructed notable area landmarks in the 1930s, like Frontier Times Museum (1933), Medina High School (1933), Bandera Middle School, and numerous churches, businesses (including the B.H. Stokes Store), and homes in Bandera and Kerr counties.⁵³

Between 1935 and 1940, LeSturgeon built ten fieldstone cottages (Cabins 1-10) for Brown Stokes at River Oaks Courts (then Stokes Motor Courts). The completed courts benefited from LeSturgeon's skill and Stokes' attractive riverside property. It even followed suggested "Don'ts" promoted by the *Medina Light*: "Don't put up an 8x10 box shack and expect nice people to rent it. The traveling public live in nice homes. Don't put it up in an unattractive open spot. Don't put your cottage too far from the water."⁵⁴

Having already completed a similar project in Bandera in 1933, LeSturgeon constructed attractive cabins with elements of contemporaneous tourist court design. The first cottages were simple square or rectangular shaped, fieldstone edifices on concrete foundations with shed carports supported by fieldstone piers. The front entrance porch supports were made of rusticated wood atop fieldstone piers, and interior fireplaces were made with petrified wood. Later cottages, Cabins 4-7, incorporated carports under the gabled roofs and arched entries. It is not known why Cabin 10 was constructed with wood lap siding, but its chimney resembles the other cottage with its fieldstone masonry construction. Overall, material elements unified the cottages that were spatially arranged in a rough "U" pattern, clustered near TX-16. The quality of craftsmanship, convenience of the adjacent carport, interior amenities, combined with its roadside and riverside location made River Motor Courts a representative mom-and-pop owned motor courts of the 1930s.

River Oaks Courts remains an excellent example of a prewar motor court. The site retains its original "U" configuration with a distinctly separate building to serve as the combination office and owners' residence. The motor courts additionally retain their original exteriors with carports. The cabins' early 20th- century Rustic style conforms to contemporaneous tourist court design and construction: the adherence to a prescribed arrangement of cottages, comfortable home-like accommodations, and Rustic exterior style that reinforced the tourist lifestyle. The construction of the fourplex in 1945 demonstrates a modest business evolution in lodging architecture as the postwar hospitality model trended towards motels. Though several of the buildings have diminished integrity of materials and workmanship through insulation upgrades or covering original flooring with vinyl tiles and collapsing rooflines, the district's overall integrity is excellent. As a result, River Oaks Courts is nominated under Criterion C for Architecture as an example of a remarkably intact fieldstone motor court from the 1930s.

River Oaks Courts is additionally nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the area of Commerce at the local level of significance with a period of significance of 1930 until 1969, covering the years River Oaks Courts operated as a majority tourist lodging business. Started by local entrepreneur Brown Stokes in 1936, the Stokes Family ran the motor courts until 1943. It remained under private "mom and pop" ownership through the present day. Its subsequent decline followed a national trend for the pre-war tourist court industry following the post-war proliferation of motel chain establishments and interstate construction that bypassed small towns and older motor courts in the 1950s..

⁵² Stephanie Park, "Medina's Pioneer Rock Moves to His Heavenly Building Site," *Bandera County Courier*, May, 28, 2009.

⁵³ Dot Ferguson Hatfield, "Medina... Along the River," 40.

⁵⁴ "Golden Opportunities," *Medina Light*, September 1, 1932.

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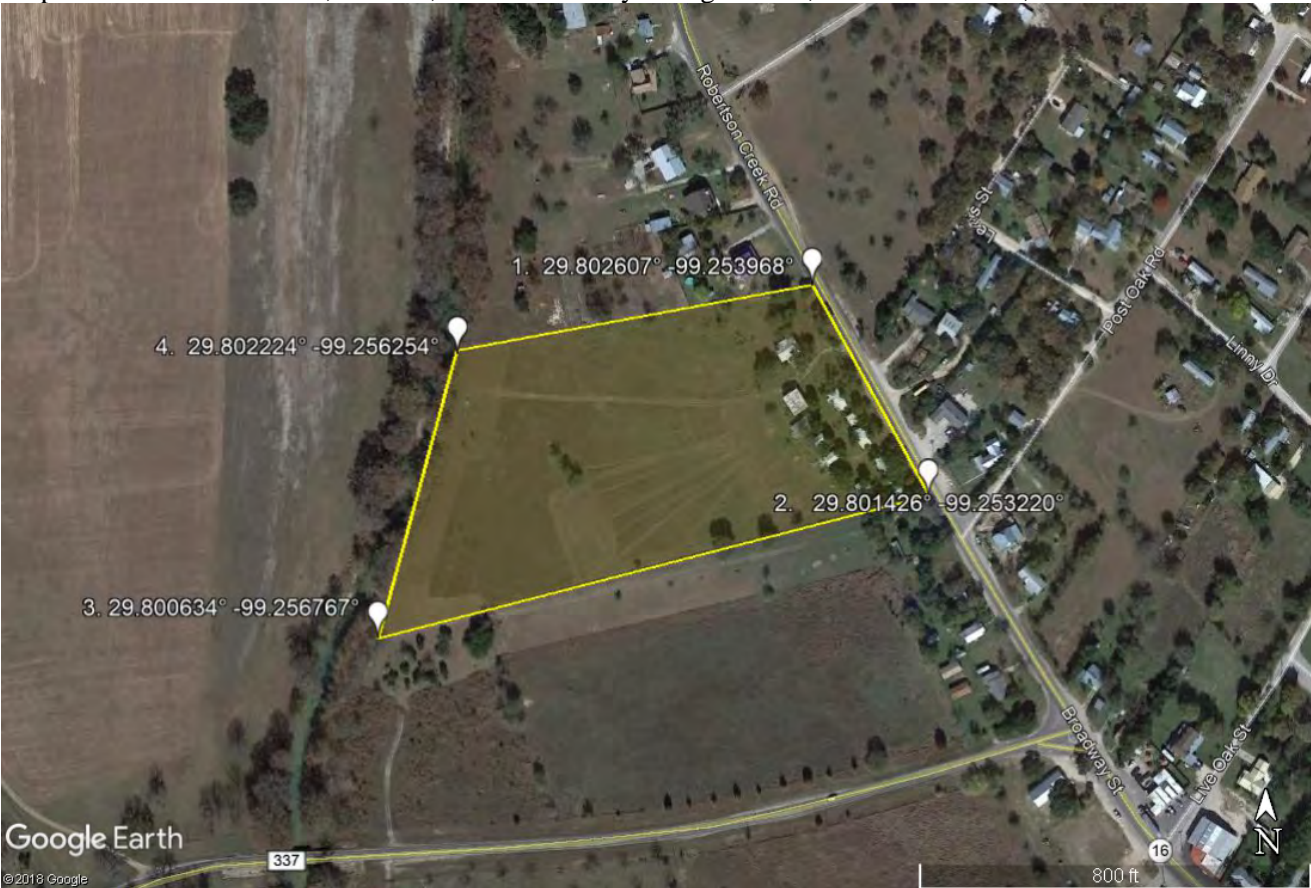
River Oaks Courts, Medina, Bandera County, Texas

Maps

Map 1 – Bandera County, Texas

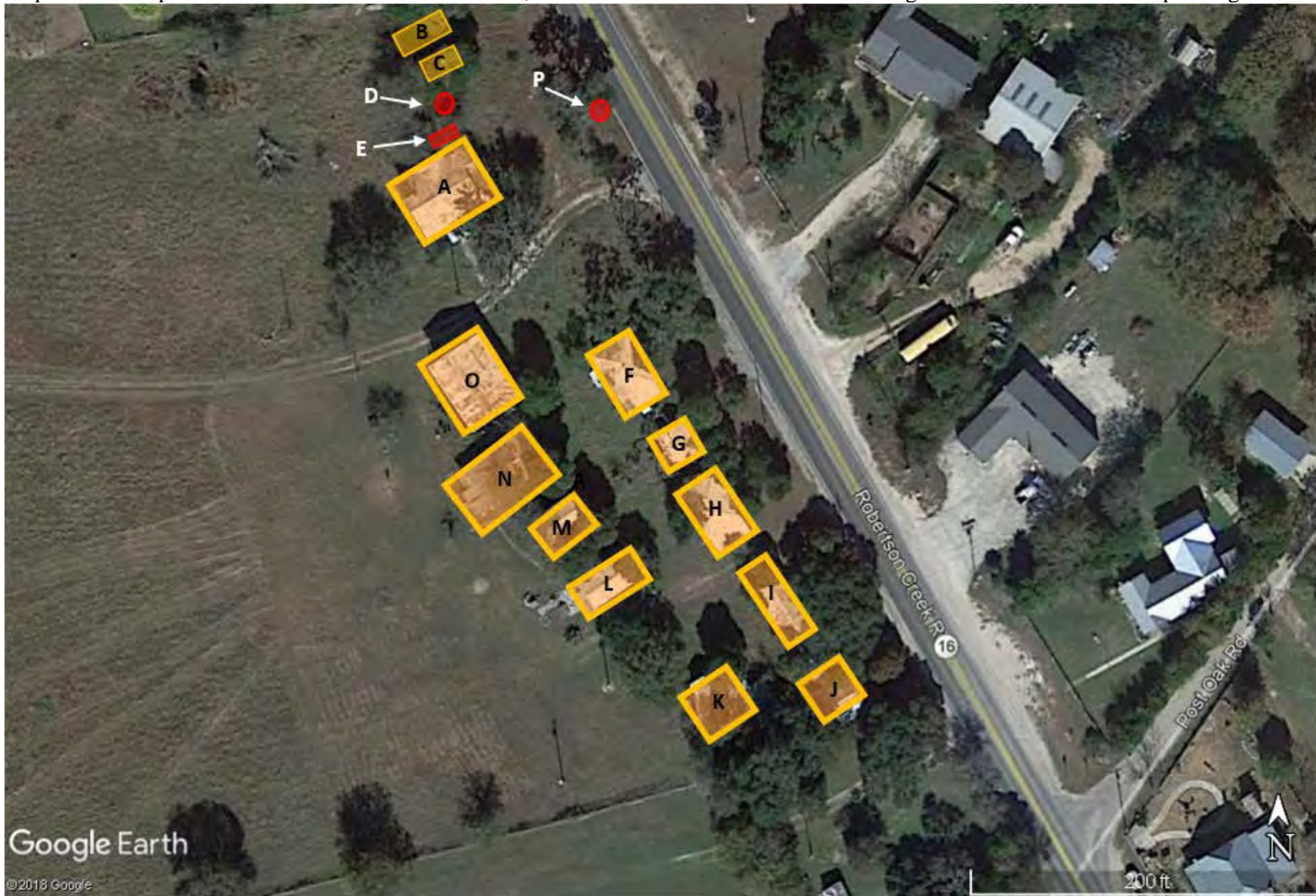


Map 2 – River Oaks Courts, Medina, Bandera County. Google Earth, accessed June 18, 2018.



River Oaks Courts, Medina, Bandera County, Texas

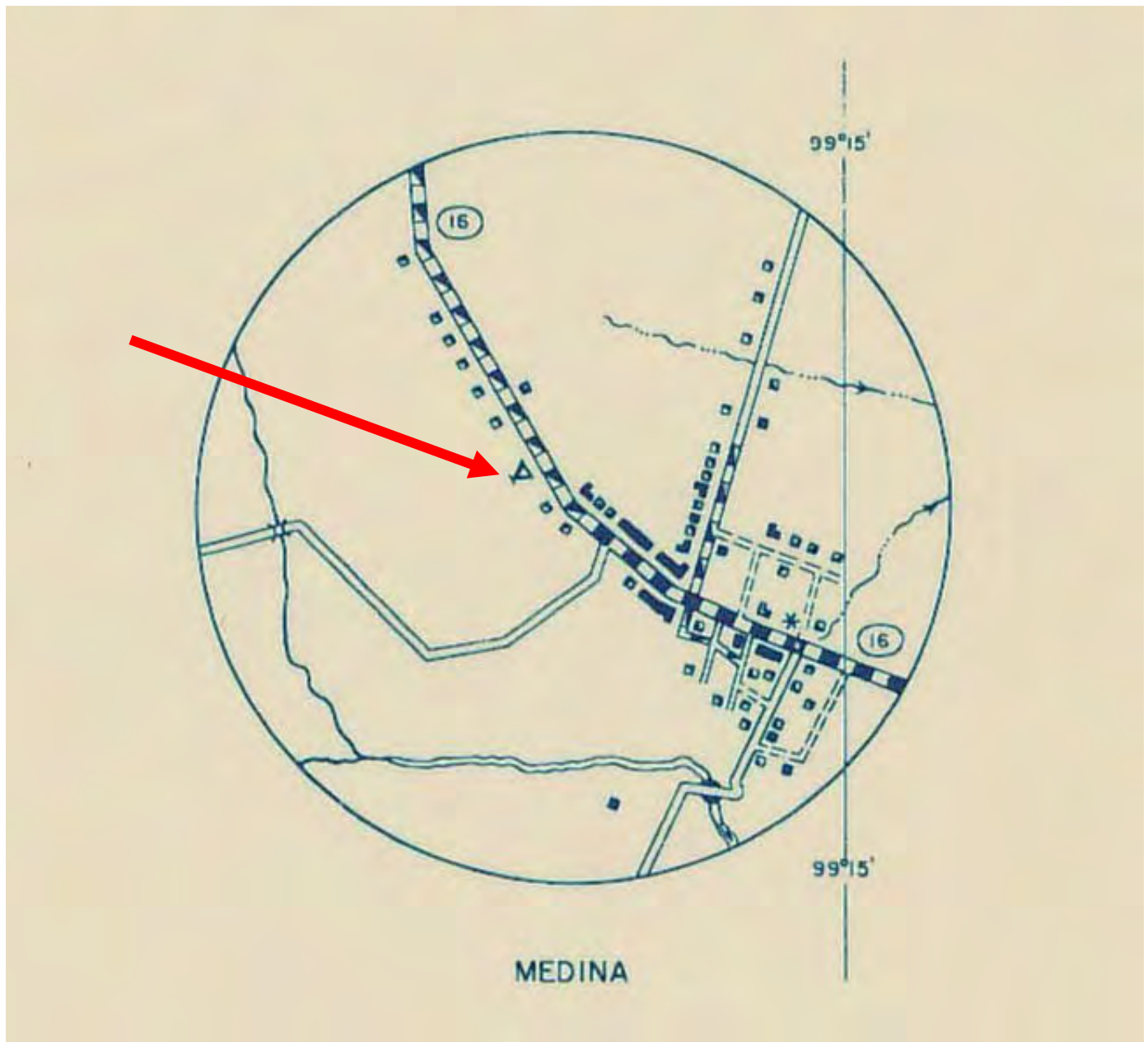
Map 3 – Site map of 16 resources at River Oaks Courts, all of which are considered Contributing to the district. See corresponding inventory on pg. 14.



River Oaks Courts, Medina, Bandera County, Texas

Figures

Figure 1 – Detail roadmap of Medina on the 1936 General Highway Map of Bandera County. The red arrow points to the nominated district, which the map indicates as a “tourist camp.” Source: Texas Highway Department (Texas Department of Transportation)



River Oaks Courts, Medina, Bandera County, Texas

Figure 2 – Residence/Office floor plan. Courtesy Heimsath Architects, Austin.

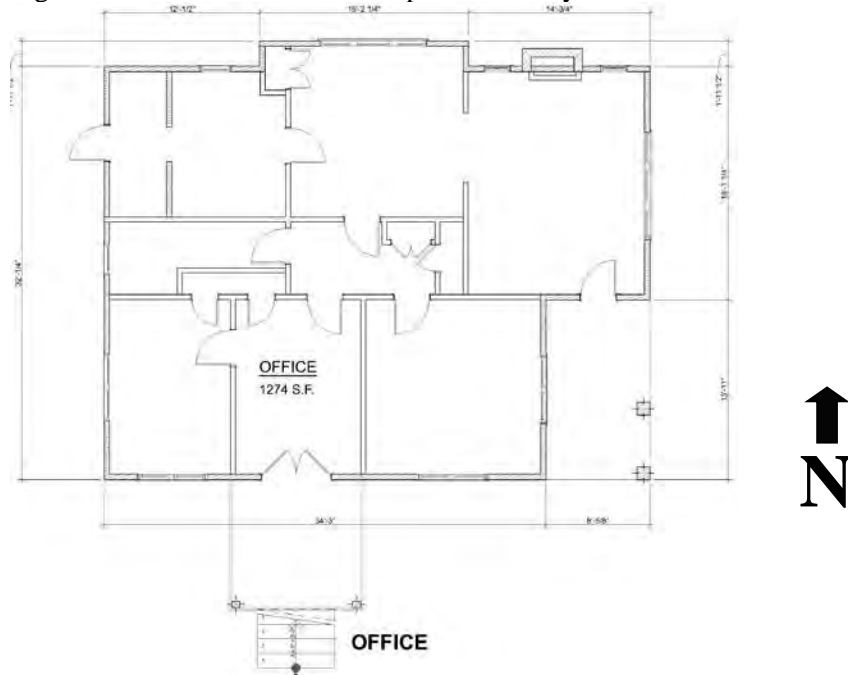
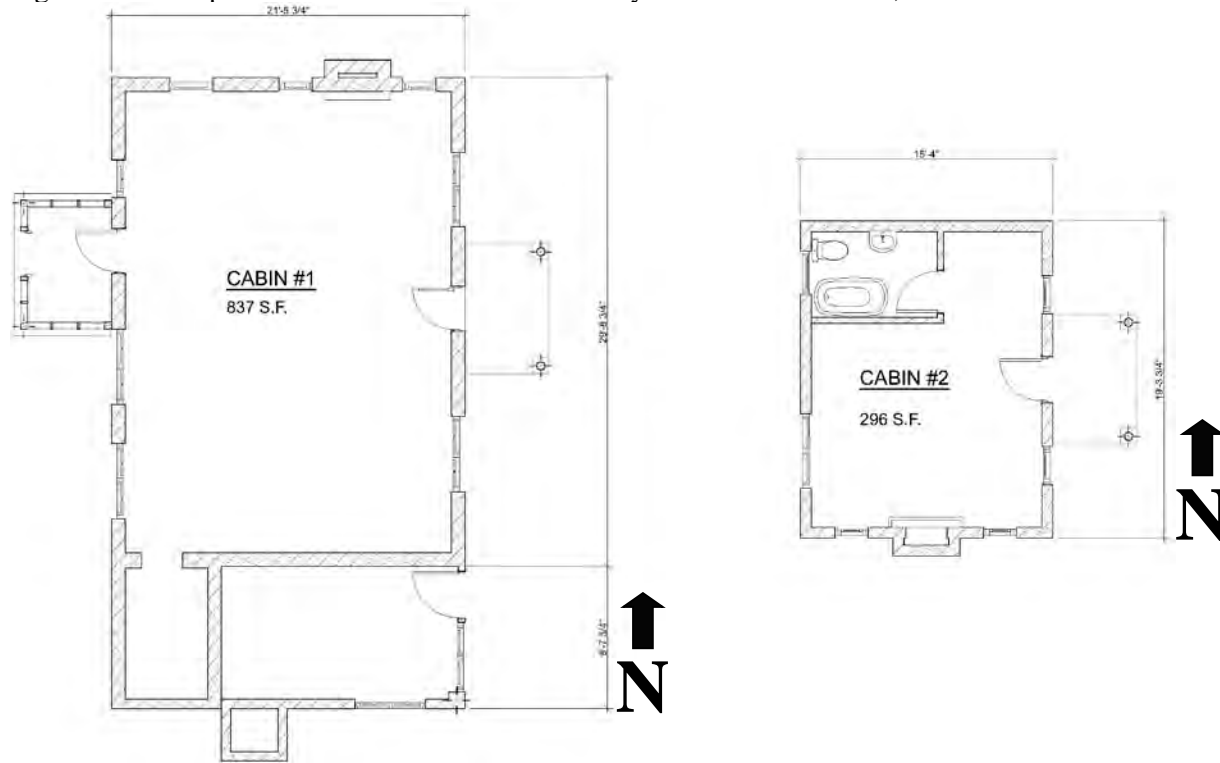
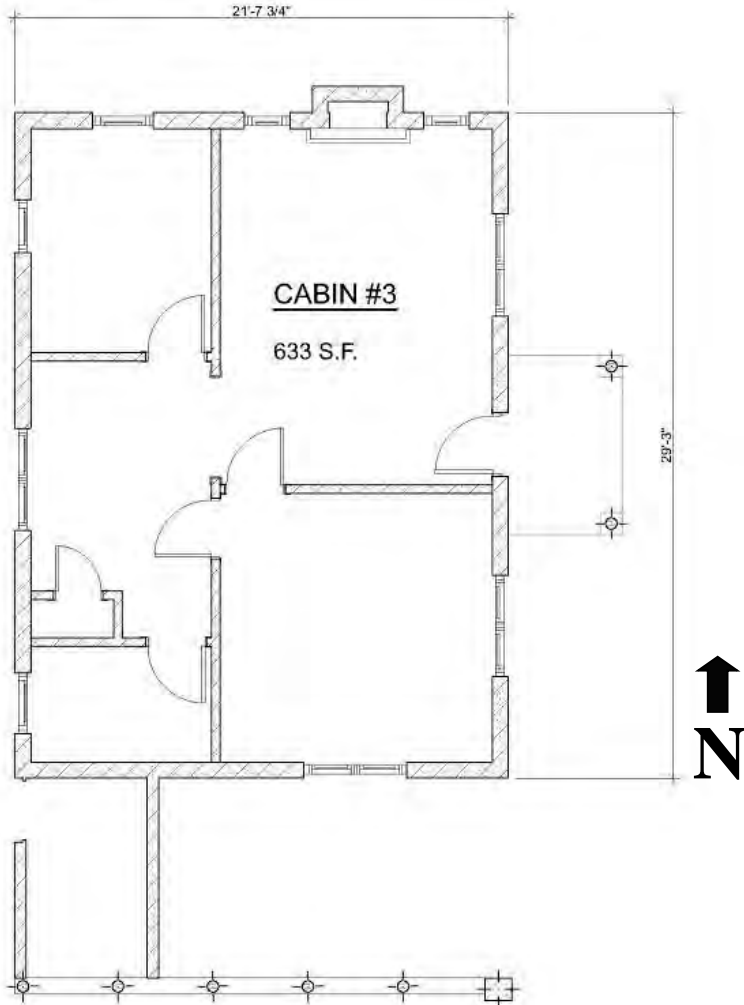


Figure 3 – Floor plans for Cabins #1 and #2. Courtesy Heimsath Architects, Austin.



River Oaks Courts, Medina, Bandera County, Texas

Figure 4 – Cabin #3 Floor plan. Courtesy Heimsath Architects, Austin.



River Oaks Courts, Medina, Bandera County, Texas

Figure 5 – Floor plans for Cabins #5 and #4, joined by double masonry arched carports. Courtesy Heimsath Architects, Austin.

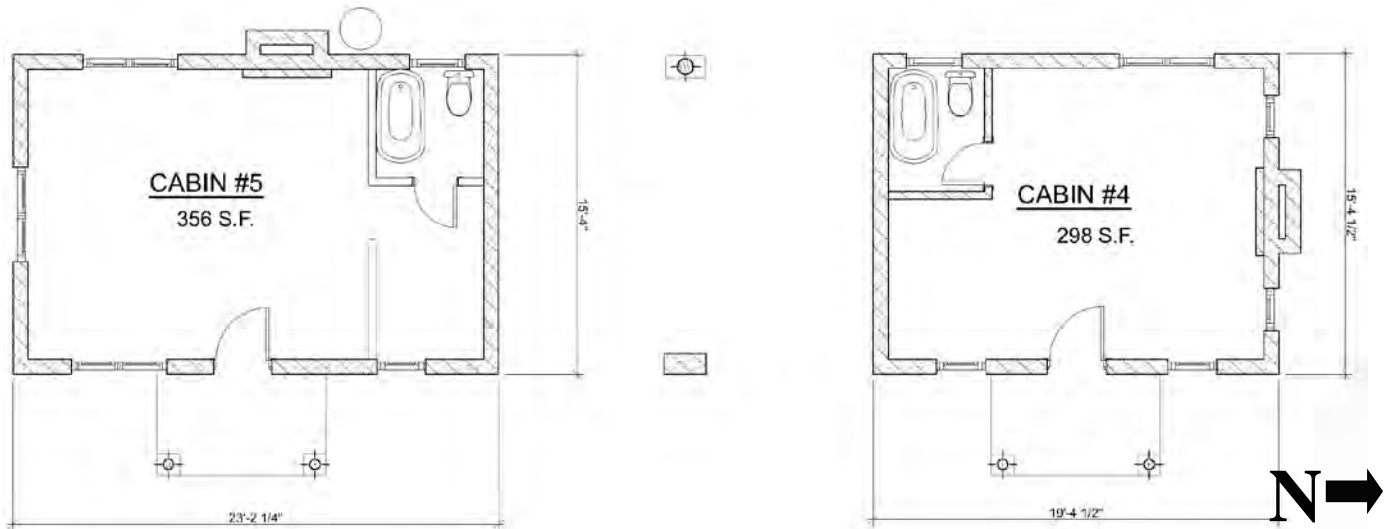
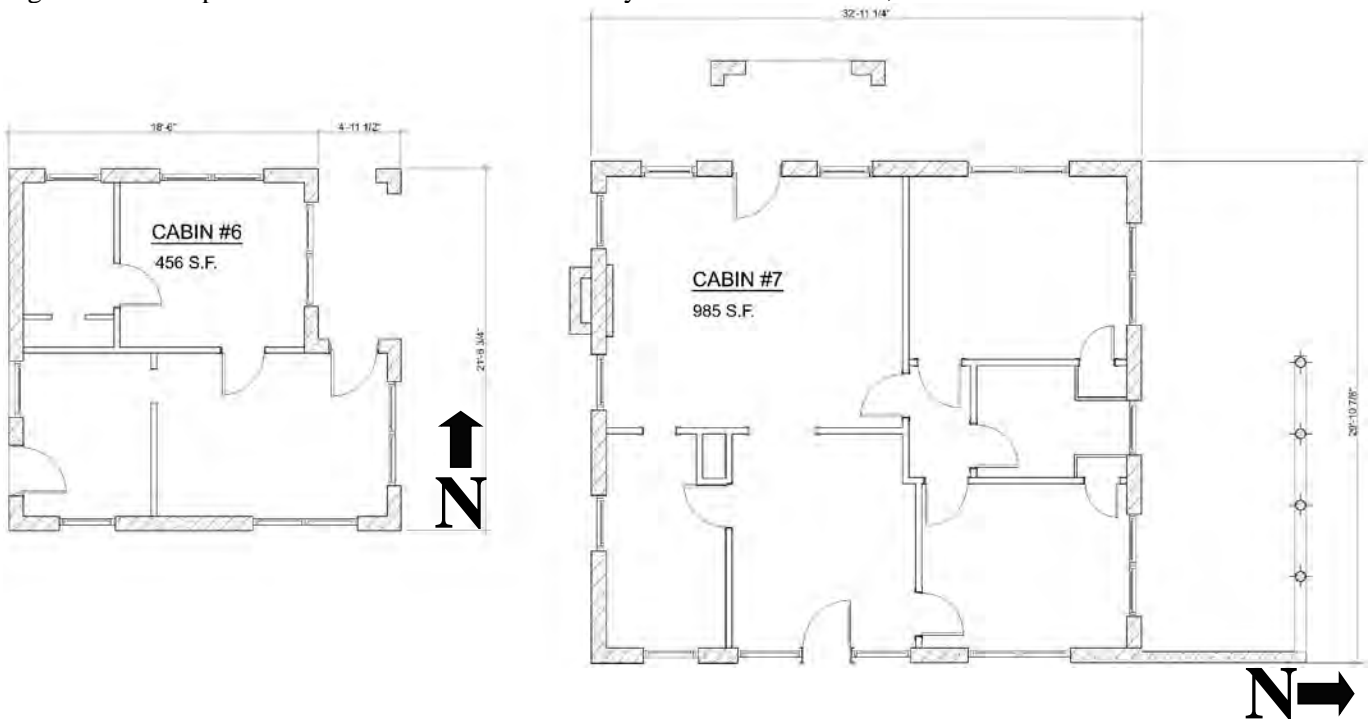


Figure 6 – Floor plans for Cabins #6 and #7. Courtesy Heimsath Architects, Austin.



River Oaks Courts, Medina, Bandera County, Texas

Figure 7 – Floor plans for Cabins #8 and #9. Courtesy Heimsath Architects, Austin.

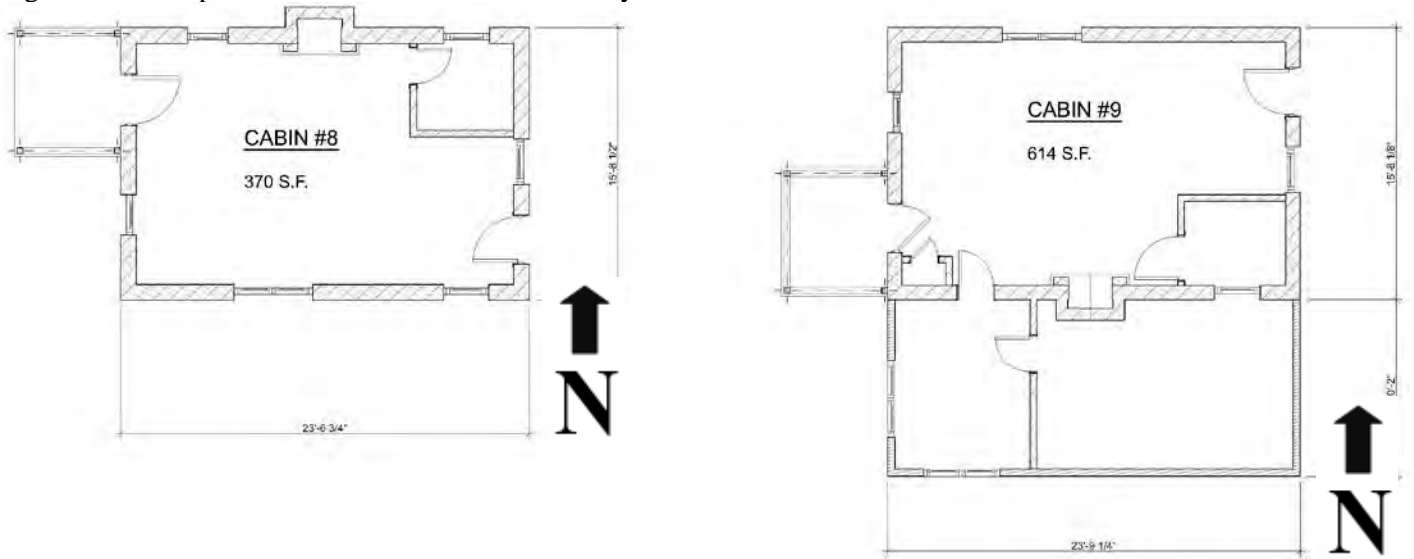
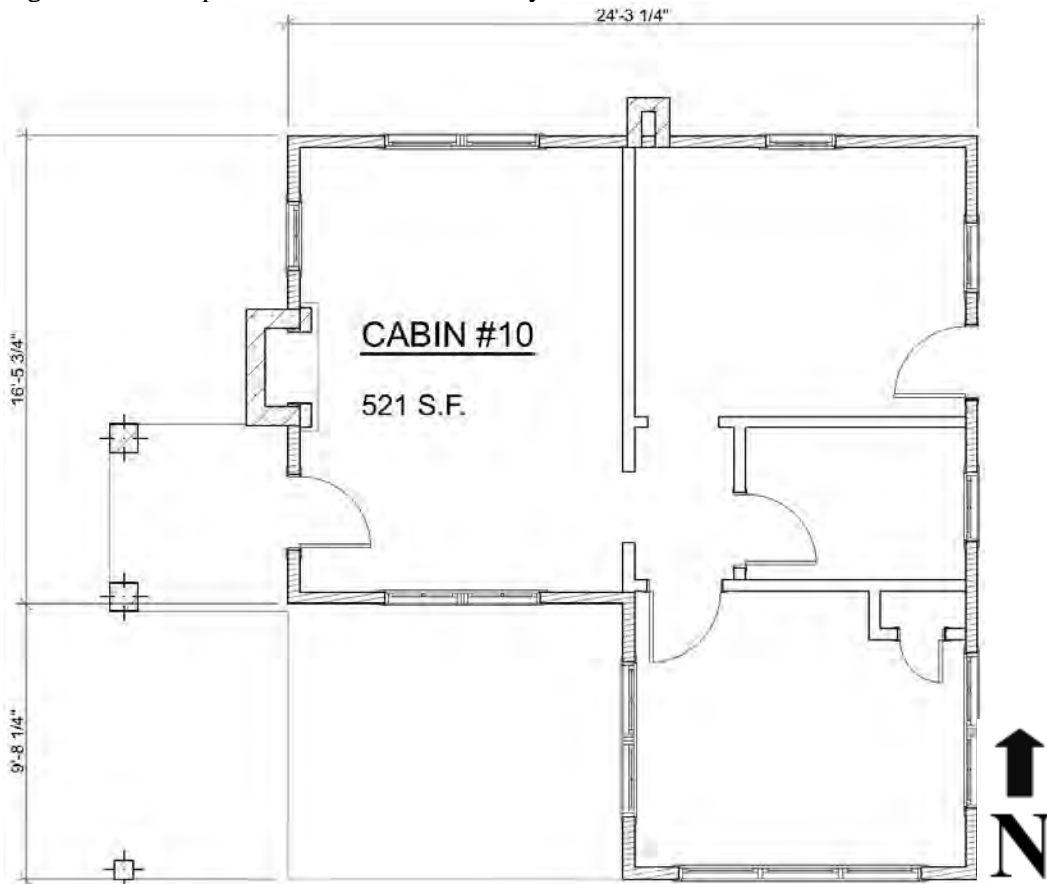
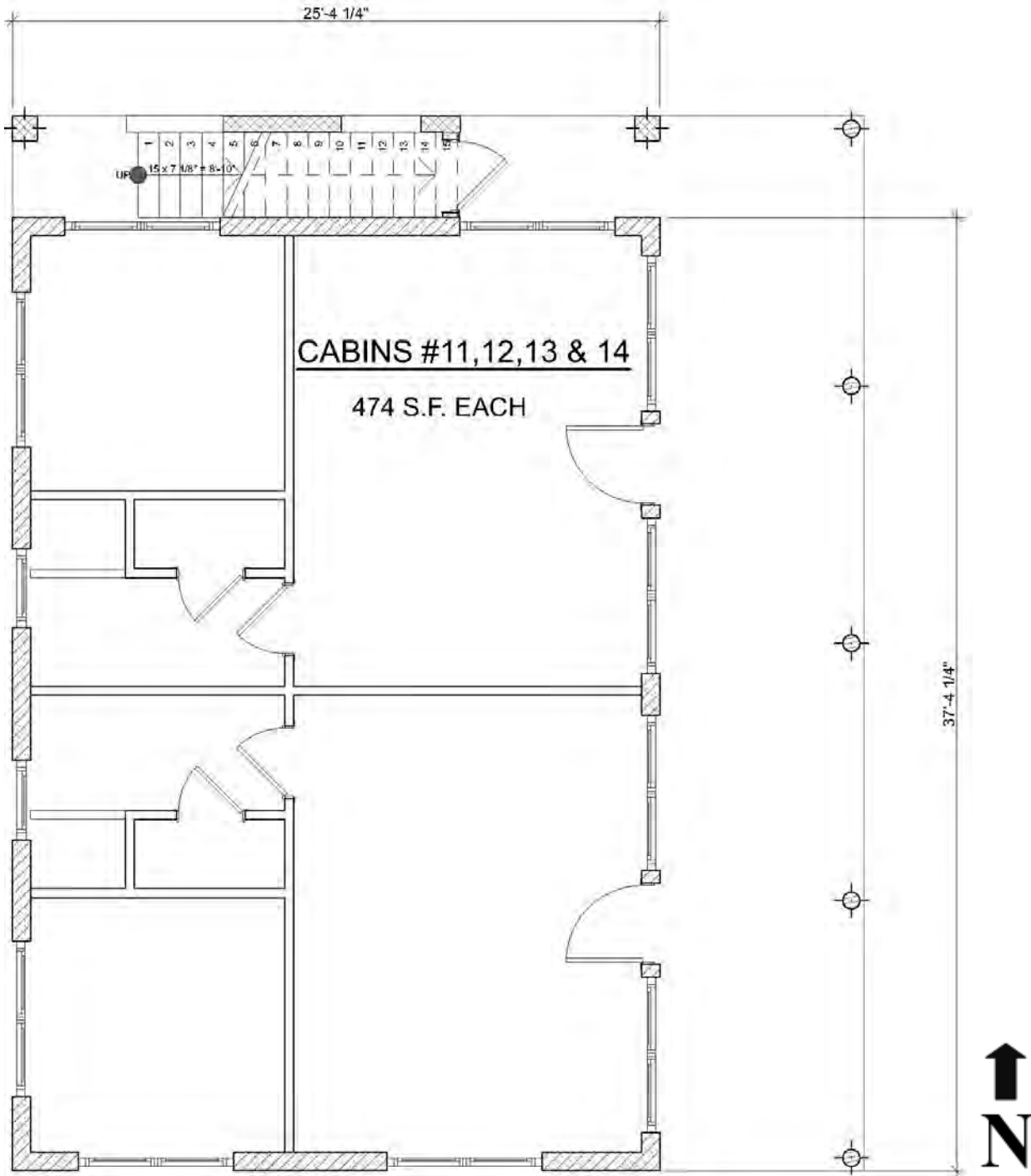


Figure 8 – Floor plan for Cabin #10. Courtesy Heimsath Architects, Austin.



River Oaks Courts, Medina, Bandera County, Texas

Figure 9 – Floor plan for Fourplex (Cabins #11-14). Levels 1 and 2 are identical. Courtesy Heimsath Architects, Austin.



River Oaks Courts, Medina, Bandera County, Texas

Figure 10 – Texas Historical Commission survey photo (c. 1975) of the 1930 bungalow residence/office. Courtesy Portal to Texas History, University of North Texas, THC Historic Resources Survey Collection.



Figure 11 – Historic post card of Cabin #1 at River Oaks Courts. Courtesy Ople Stokes Boyle.



River Oaks Courts, Medina, Bandera County, Texas

Figure 12 – Historic post card of River Oaks Courts with Cabin #1 in the foreground. Courtesy Ople Stokes Boyle.



Figure 13 – Historic post card of River Oaks Courts with Cabin #2 in foreground. Courtesy Ople Stokes Boyle.



River Oaks Courts, Medina, Bandera County, Texas

Figure 14 – Historic post card of Cabin #2 at River Oaks Courts. Courtesy Ople Stokes Boyle.



Figure 15 – Historic post card of Cabin #6 at River Oaks Courts. Courtesy Ople Stokes Boyle.



River Oaks Courts, Medina, Bandera County, Texas

Figure 16 – Postcard the Medina River behind Stokes Motor Courts (River Oaks Courts), c. 1938
Courtesy of the Texas Historical Commission.



Figure 17: River Oaks Courts under Stroup ownership, c. 1948. The fourplex is in the background. The postcard advertises “River Oaks Courts... ‘A home Away from Home,’ for the entire family. Kitchenettes, refrigerators, Simmons mattresses, swimming and picnicking. In the heart of the beautiful Texas hill country, on Highway 16. Cool, clean and quiet. Weekly and monthly rates. Open year round. Ideal climate.” Courtesy of the Texas Historical Commission.



River Oaks Courts, Medina, Bandera County, Texas

Photographs

Address: 14349 TX16, Medina, Bandera County, Texas

Photographer: SWCA Environmental Consultants

Date: August 2017

Photo 1 – Residence/office Building south façade and east elevation, camera facing northwest. This building was the Stokes' family home on the property and was the first building constructed on site in 1930.



Photo 2 – Cabin #1 east façade and north elevation, camera facing southwest. Cabin #1, built in 1935, was the first rental cottage constructed at River Oaks Courts.



River Oaks Courts, Medina, Bandera County, Texas

Photo 3 – Cabin #2 east façade, camera facing west.



Photo 4 – Cabin #3 east façade, camera facing west.



River Oaks Courts, Medina, Bandera County, Texas

Photo 5 – Cabins #4 and #5 east façades with arched carports, camera facing west.



Photo 6 – Cabin #6 south elevation and east façade, camera facing northwest. Cabin #6 was the last cabin sited facing east towards TX-16.



River Oaks Courts, Medina, Bandera County, Texas

Photo 7 – Cabin #7 east elevation and north façade, camera facing southwest. Cabin #7 is oriented north to face the Residence/office Building.



Photo 8 – Cabin #8 west façade, camera facing east. Common exterior historic alterations include gabled porches.



River Oaks Courts, Medina, Bandera County, Texas

Photo 9 – Cabin #9 west façade, camera facing east.



Photo 10 – Cabin #10 west façade, camera facing east.



River Oaks Courts, Medina, Bandera County, Texas

Photo 11 – 1945 Fourplex (units #11-14) east façade, camera facing west.



Photo 12 – River Oaks Courts roadside sign (c. 1945), camera facing south.



River Oaks Courts, Medina, Bandera County, Texas

Photo 13 – Garage east and north elevations, camera facing southwest. The garage stored a vehicle, and the western end contained a utility room with a gas-powered washing machine.



Photo 14 – Utility shed west elevation, camera facing east.



River Oaks Courts, Medina, Bandera County, Texas

Photo 15 – Artesian well, camera facing east.



Photo 16 – Stone pillars, camera facing south. Hardware attached to the pillars suggest it may have been a gate to a previously-enclosed garden.



River Oaks Courts, Medina, Bandera County, Texas

Photo 17 – River Oaks Courts, overall view. Camera facing southwest from across TX-16. The residence/office is (right) and fourplex (center) visible.



Photo 18 – River Oaks Courts, camera facing north from the center of the site. The site is grassy with scattered trees and utility lines. In the foreground are Cabin 2 (right) and Cabin 9 (left).



River Oaks Courts, Medina, Bandera County, Texas

Photo 19 – Cabin #1 interior, camera facing northeast. The cottage retains original windows, fireplace, trim, and floors.



Photo 20 – Cabin #4 interior, camera facing north. All cabins were fully-furnished.



River Oaks Courts, Medina, Bandera County, Texas

Photo 21 – Cabin #5 interior, camera facing north. Most cottages featured a kitchenette, shown here behind the half-wall.



Photo 22 – Cabin #13 interior, camera facing northwest. Units 11-14 have identical floor plans.









2









POSTED









11

12

RENTAL

VACANCY























UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action: Nomination

Property Name: River Oaks Courts

Multiple Name:

State & County: TEXAS, Bandera

Date Received: 12/13/2018 Date of Pending List: 12/28/2018 Date of 16th Day: 1/14/2019 Date of 45th Day: 1/28/2019 Date of Weekly List:

Reference number: SG100003354

Nominator: SHPO

Reason For Review:

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Appeal | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PDIL | <input type="checkbox"/> Text/Data Issue |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SHPO Request | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape | <input type="checkbox"/> Photo |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waiver | <input type="checkbox"/> National | <input type="checkbox"/> Map/Boundary |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Resubmission | <input type="checkbox"/> Mobile Resource | <input type="checkbox"/> Period |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | <input type="checkbox"/> TCP | <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 50 years |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> CLG | |

Accept Return Reject 1/28/2019 Date

Abstract/Summary Comments: The River Oaks Courts are locally significant under National Register Criteria A and C in the areas of Commerce and Architecture. Built between 1935 and 1945, River Oaks Courts (aka Stokes Motor Courts) is a pre-WWII tourist motor court reflecting the growth of small scale (mom & pop) roadside tourist accommodations in the rural Hill Country area of Texas during the Depression. The wood-frame, rock-faced cottages built by local mason Bruce LeSturgeon represent distinctive local examples of rustic-style resort design from the era and the site's overall plan organization follows typical motor court designs.

Recommendation/ Criteria: Accept NR Criteria A and C

Reviewer: Paul Lusignan Discipline: Historian

Telephone: (202)354-2229 Date: 1/28/2018

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments : No see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
real places telling real stories



TO: Paul Lusignan
 National Register of Historic Places
 Mail Stop 7228
 1849 C St, NW
 Washington, D.C. 20240

From: Mark Wolfe, SHPO
 Texas Historical Commission

RE: River Oaks Courts, Medina, Bandera County, Texas

DATE: December 10, 2018

The following materials are submitted:

X	Original National Register of Historic Places form on disk. The enclosed disk contains the true and correct copy of the National Register of Historic Places nomination for the River Oaks Courts, Medina, Bandera County, Texas
	Resubmitted nomination.
X	Original NRHP signature page signed by the Texas SHPO.
	Multiple Property Documentation form on disk.
	Resubmitted form.
	Original MPDF signature page signed by the Texas SHPO.
X	CD with TIFF photograph files, KMZ files, and nomination PDF
	Correspondence.

COMMENTS:

- SHPO requests substantive review (cover letter from SHPO attached)
- The enclosed owner objections (do) (do not) constitute a majority of property owners
- Other:

